

1999 Standardized Testing and Reporting Program

Questions and Answers for Parents

What is the STAR testing program?

One part of the state testing system is called the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program. This program, administered annually, was authorized in 1997 through Senate Bill 376. The purpose of the STAR program is to help measure how well students are learning basic academic skills.

Who must take the STAR test?

All students in grades 2 through 11 must take the designated STAR test. Students learning English and students in special education programs are included in “all” students, and they must take the test. The only students exempted from STAR testing are students whose Individual Education Plans (IEP) specifically exempt them from standardized testing and students with written parent requests to exempt them.

What tests did the students take in 1999?

For the second year, public school students were tested in English with the Stanford Achievement Test, Ninth Edition, Form T (Stanford 9), published by Harcourt Brace Educational Measurement.

Students in grades 2 through 11 were tested in reading, writing, and mathematics. Students in grades 2 through 8 were also tested in spelling; students in grades 9 through 11 also took history-social science and science tests in English.

As part of the STAR program, students also were administered additional test questions that match state-adopted content standards for reading, writing, and mathematics. The purpose of expanding or augmenting the test was to better align the STAR program with state standards.

How did the questions for the STAR augmentation relate to a student’s grade level?

In grades 2 through 7 and in grade 11, the questions for the STAR augmentation in reading, writing, and mathematics were tied to what students should know and be able to do at each grade level. In grades 8 through 10, augmented questions for reading and writing were tied to specific grade levels. The augmented questions for mathematics in grades 8 through 10 were not tied to a specific grade level but to the math course in which a student was enrolled.

What are the math courses for which there is a STAR augmentation?

There were six test options for the math augmentation: algebra I, geometry, algebra II, 1st-year integrated math, 2nd-year integrated math, and 3rd-year integrated math.

What if a student in grade 8, 9, or 10 was not enrolled in one of the specified courses?

A student in grade 8, 9, or 10 who was not enrolled in one of the specified courses did not take the STAR augmentation in mathematics. That student took the mathematics portion of the Stanford 9, Form T, and will receive results for that part of the STAR test.

If a student in grade 8, 9, or 10 was enrolled in a math class more advanced than his or her grade level, how will the scores for the augmentation be reported?

Students in grade 8, 9, or 10, who took an augmented test above or below the designated grade-level test will receive individual scores but will not have their scores included in the school scores for their grade level.

School, district, county, and state scores for the math augmentation will only include eighth graders completing the algebra I or 1st-year integrated math tests, ninth graders completing the geometry or 2nd-year integrated math tests, and tenth graders completing the algebra II or 3rd-year integrated math tests.

What about limited English proficient students?

In addition to taking the designated STAR test in English, a primary language test in Spanish must be taken by limited English proficient Spanish-speaking students who first enrolled in California public schools less than 12 months prior to testing. The designated test in Spanish for this spring was the Spanish Assessment of Basic Education, Second Edition (SABE/2). This test is published by CTB McGraw-Hill. Primary language testing is optional if the students first enrolled more than 12 months prior to testing. The SABE/2 covers reading, language, mathematics, spelling at grades 2 through 11; word analysis at grades 2 and 3; and study skills at grades 4 through 11.

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Who gave the STAR tests, and how long did they take?

Teachers who received special training gave the tests at the local school. It took approximately 7 hours of testing time for the Stanford 9 and augmentation. The primary language test in Spanish added about 4 hours of testing time for limited English proficient students taking the SABE/2. In most schools testing time was spread over several days.

How were the questions on the tests asked?

All of the test questions were in a multiple-choice format. These questions required students to select the correct answer from four possible answers. Questions on the Stanford 9 and SABE/2 tests have been tried out with thousands of students throughout the United States to see if they are appropriate for the grade level and content being tested. Questions for the STAR augmentation were tried out on students throughout California.

Can parents see the STAR tests?

No. The test questions can be seen only by students when they take the tests. This security measure ensures that the tests are fair for all students and that test questions can be used for more than one year. The law requiring STAR testing does allow local school boards to see the tests under secure conditions.

What if parents did not want their student tested?

According to Education Code section 60615, parents or guardians could submit a written request to the principal of their child's school if they did not wish to have their child take any or all parts of the tests. Written requests from parents or guardians were honored.

What was done to help students with special needs?

Most students with special needs took the test with all other students under standard conditions. Certain accommodations and adaptations such as additional time, Braille, or large print tests were provided for those special education students who needed assistance.

Accommodations also included revised test directions or format or the use of aides and/or aids to provide

additional help. Testing accommodations for students in special education were content-specific and had to be based on explicit statements in each student's IEP.

What if a student is absent on testing days or misses one part of the required tests?

Schools will provide at least two test makeup dates. Parents should contact the school about test makeup procedures.

Who will see the test results for individual students?

Each student's teacher and parents or guardians will see the individual student results. Individual student results are confidential. Copies will be kept in the student's cumulative file with other confidential data.

How and when will parents get their student's test results?

Each student's test results must be reported to parents within 20 working days after the school district receives them. In most cases, these reports will be mailed. Group results by grade level for each school, district, county, and the state will be posted on the Internet no later than June 30. Results for the Stanford 9 and augmentation and results for the SABE/2 will be on separate reports.

How will test results be reported for individual students?

The Stanford 9 and SABE/2 results will be reported as national percentiles. A national percentile compares the student's results with student scores at the same grade tested at the same time of the school year in a national sample.

This year the scores for the STAR augmentation will be reported as the number of questions the student answered correctly. There will be no comparison to other students. In future years, these scores will indicate levels of student performance, such as advanced, proficient, basic, and below basic.

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How will test results be reported for individual students? (continued)

Cautionary Note*: Standards-based scores measure how well students are performing relative to the newly adopted state standards. This year's standards-based scores are not intended to measure how well students have learned what they have been taught because many schools do not yet include many of the state standards in their classroom teaching.

** The State Board of Education directed the publisher to include this cautionary note in the parent report.*

Students with special needs who took the Stanford 9 in Braille or received extra time or assistance to complete the Stanford 9 or SABE/2 will have only the number of questions they correctly answered reported. There will be no comparisons to a national sample because the publishers have not established national percentiles for these accommodations.

How will the test results be used?

Teachers, parents, and students will use individual results to help monitor each student's academic progress. Individual student results are merged to prepare grade-level reports by subject area for each school, district, county, and the state. The results are used with other information about student achievement to help make decisions about ways to improve student learning and school programs.

How do the STAR test results fit with other information about a student's academic progress?

STAR test results are one of the ways schools measure student achievement. Tools for monitoring student progress include but are not limited to standardized tests such as the ones used for STAR, district tests, classroom tests and projects, and student grades. Test results from the STAR program can be used to help measure student progress over time and to provide comparisons with other states and the nation.

How can parents help their students do better on STAR next time?

Prior to testing each year, parents need to talk to their students about the STAR test(s) and encourage them to do their best. Parents or guardians should:

- make sure class assignments and homework are completed throughout the year.
- listen to students read every day—review what they are doing in school.
- ensure that students are in school every day unless they are ill.

Parents can help prepare students for testing day by making sure they have plenty of rest and a good breakfast. Schools have detailed information on ways families can help their students improve in specific academic areas.

How can parents help the school improve student achievement?

Schools invite parents, guardians, and other community members to become actively involved in improving student learning. Every school has various committees of parents who assist in school decision making, including the Parent Teacher Association and School Site Councils. In addition, individual teachers are frequently in search of volunteers to support classroom instruction. Research studies show that parent and community involvement in the school can improve academic achievement.

How can parents learn more about the STAR test results?

The school will provide a brief explanation about the results with the parent reports. No school, district, county, or state results will be reported on the individual student reports. These reports will be available on the Internet at www.cde.ca.gov on June 30. Individual student scores **will not** be on the Internet.

Many schools will be holding parent information sessions before the results are reported and will have someone available during scheduled hours to answer specific questions. It is suggested that you call your student's school for information about specific plans to help parents or guardians understand the student reports.